

# State Law Library of Montana



STATE ADMINISTRATION

Exhibit No. 3

Date 3-14-07

Justice Building • Bill No. 215 ~~North~~ HB 132

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March 14, 2007

RE: House bill 132

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on State Administration,

I write to you to urge your support for HB 132. This bill will ensure that the information produced by Montana's governmental entities for public dissemination will be captured and preserved for access by future generations.

Following the release of a national survey of state practices three and half years ago, I convened a task force to address the problems which have resulted from the rapid and inexorable loss of born digital state publications in Montana. The task force was composed of Montana's Chief Information Officer, the State Librarian, the State Archivist, the Director of the Montana Historical Society's Research Center, the Chief Legal Counsel for the Secretary of State, the State Records Manager, the Executive Director of the Legislature's Legislative Services Division, and the Chief Civil Counsel for the Attorney General. We have worked since that time to bring before you what we believe is the best solution available.

State agencies in all three branches of our government have embraced the use of electronic media to publish and distribute the research and work that they do. In doing so they save the money spent on printing and mailing, and also, usually reach a wider audience. However, none of the entities has a plan or the technology for capturing this data and ensuring its migration to new software and hardware platforms.

It is estimated that over the next three years, humanity will generate more data than it has in the past one thousand years – and nearly all of that will be digital. Government documents and publications which are used by historians, politicians, courts, scholars and government workers are slipping, irretrievably, into the digital ether because they are not captured, preserved, and translated for new systems. Unlike the sturdier format of paper and books, digital information is extremely fragile, disappearing as software becomes obsolete, hardware breaks down and viruses wipe out discs.

Without your intervention, we will lose our historical record. You have the opportunity to help mitigate this crisis by passing legislation that will provide for the permanent public access of born digital information by the State Library, the appropriate entity for this role.

Thank you for the work you do for us, and your consideration of my remarks. I urge a unanimous vote of "Be Concurred In" for House Bill 132.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Judy Meadows".

Judy Meadows

State Law Librarian